

## PROFESSIONALISM

The use of pesticides is often a source of public controversy and anxiety. This is even so when good integrated pest management programs are used. Public opinion is becoming more opposed to pesticide use. This is particularly so in urban areas or areas used by children (e.g., schools, playgrounds, recreation areas). In these areas, even the most careful use of pesticides can stir up conflict of opinions. Applicators now find themselves under increasing scrutiny from the public, clients, and the media. Today's pesticide applicators must do their work in a professional manner. They must also 'appear' to be working as professionals in the eyes of the public.

### Learning Objectives

Completing this chapter will help you to:

- Know why it is important for a pesticide applicator to deal professionally with the public and how to do so.
- Know what is needed to have a positive professional image.
- Know the importance of public relations to pesticide managers.

Pest control is becoming a complex industry. There is a call for less toxic pesticides and integrated pest management. The public expects applicators to show skill and professionalism in their work. Pesticide applicators can show their skill and ability by the following factors:

- Professionalism - Showing a professional image
- Knowledge - Having a knowledge of pest management
- Communication - Communicating with the public

- Attitude - Having a good attitude
- Work habits - Working professionally

These factors will be discussed in more detail below.

## Professionalism

Public relations are interactions between the applicator and others (bystanders, clients, and other concerned people or groups). Each group has its own interests, concerns, priorities, and perceptions. A professional applicator should listen and consider the concerns of others when conducting pest management.

Good public relations have many benefits. These include:

- Professional credibility
- Improved public trust and confidence
- Enhanced client confidence
- An informed public that is involved, interested, and supportive
- A better knowledge of public concerns that can arise from pest management

## Knowledge

Applicators with a good working knowledge of pesticides and their use are able to make good pest management choices. They are also better able to tell others about pesticides they use and their profession. Applicators should know:

- Information required for provincial pesticide applicator certification/licensing
- Public concerns on pesticide use, human health, and the environment
- Where to get good resource material (publications, organizations, etc.)
- Current information on the control of specific pests



- The relations between the pest, the host, and the environment
- The values and risks of the pest and pest control methods
- Related federal, provincial, and municipal laws

Those who work with pesticides must continually upgrade their knowledge. Pest management decisions will then be based on the best available practices. This can be done through government or industry training programs, seminars, or trade shows. You can also study written materials (e.g., training manuals, journals, industry

newsletters, etc.). If you are asked a question about a pesticide or pest, do not guess the answer. Obtain the answer, and get back to the person.

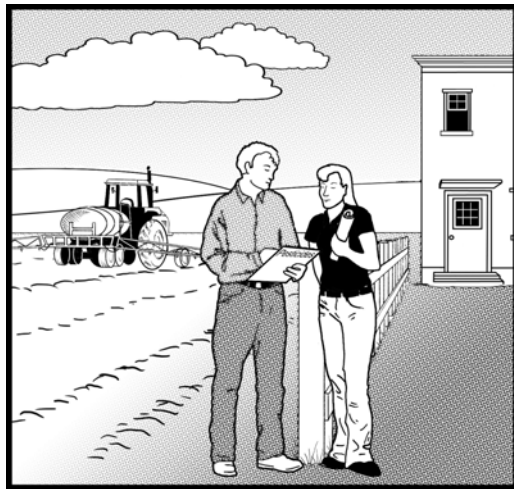
**Never guess the answer to a question. Find out the correct answer, and get back to the person.**

## Communication

Effective communication with clients and the public is key to a well-informed community. Without this, vital pest management programs, such those which deal with public health pest problems, may be threatened. Pesticide applicators can better communicate with the public when they:

- Listen to public concerns
- Try to understand conflicting viewpoints
- Involve the public and their clients in decisions that can affect them

- Take part in public forums
- Plan and review communications
- Are honest and cooperative with the public and government
- Speak clearly and sincerely
- Respond to the media
- Avoid poorly chosen or less than honest statements
- Provide the facts



**Figure 10-1: Notify neighbors of planned spray activities**

## Attitude

A positive attitude supports the profession and earns respect from clients, colleagues, and the public. It can also help to reduce fear and discomfort around the use of pesticides. Pesticide applicators can show a positive attitude by doing the following:

- Limit pesticide use. For example, never perform a whole lawn treatment when a spot treatment will do.
- Keep a safe work environment for applicators.
- Show concern for the environment.
- Refuse unsafe work.

## APPLICATION CORE

- Respond quickly and effectively to requests for information, complaints, concerns, or emergencies.
- Stay within your skill area.
- Make recommendations based on facts.
- Take the concerns of bystanders and neighbours into account.
- Spend time with the client or public to explain the operation.

## Work Habits/Activities

An applicator can also demonstrate professionalism through good work habits. This will assure clients and the public that pest control is being performed properly. Good daily work habits include the following:

- Use pesticides responsibly, and follow the pesticide label.
- Notify neighbours or possible bystanders before any pesticide application.
- Do not use pesticides when bystanders are present.
- Use integrated pest management (IPM).
- Use only pesticide application rates as stated on the label.
- Keep a record of each application.
- Avoid applications during unsuitable weather.
- Identify yourself to clients/public verbally, and use signs on vehicles and application equipment.
- Check to be sure it is the correct site for the application (for example, that you are at 123 Birch St. and not 123 Birch Road.)

There are many ways to show good work habits. For example, open communication within the business (e.g., supervisors and employees) will demonstrate a sharing of important information.

Schedule daily and weekly preventative maintenance inspections. This will ensure that application equipment is clean and well maintained. Applicators should be familiar with equipment before using it. Equipment/vehicles should be used in a safe and proper manner. Applicators should give thought to ground, weather, and road conditions. They should plan ahead to avoid problems that can arise during the application.

An emergency response plan must be in place to address spills. A spill cleanup kit should be on hand at each operation site. When moving between application sites, equipment and PPE should be cleaned to prevent the spread of pests and pesticide residues. Professional applicators should keep records. They should perform follow up inspections to ensure that treatments have been effective. An applicator must remain visible. Verbally introduce yourself to clients. Use marked vehicles and application equipment. Post all treated areas.

### **Summary**

Because of concerns from the public, clients, and the media, pesticide applicators must work as professionals. This includes:

- **Projecting a professional image**
- **Having knowledge of pest management**
- **Communicating effectively with the public**
- **Having a positive attitude**
- **Acting in a professional manner**

## Self-test Questions

*Answers are located in Appendix A of this manual.*

1. As a pesticide professional, you must consider the interests and concerns of others. **True or false?**
2. List 5 qualities of professionalism that can support professionalism.

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3. Which of the following is **not** an advantage of conducting yourself as a professional?
  - a) Improves credibility and client confidence
  - b) Improves public trust
  - c) Helps to deal with complaints or problems from pest control work
  - d) Improves control of persistent pests
4. As a pesticide applicator, which item of information do you **not** need to know?
  - a) Information required for pesticide applicator certification/licensing
  - b) Relationship between EPA Registration Number and the PCP Registration Number
  - c) The relationship between the pest, host, and the environment
  - d) Relative federal, provincial, and municipal laws

5. List nine (9) ways that a pesticide applicator can show a good attitude.

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6. List fourteen(14) ways that a pesticide applicator can display good work habits.

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**APPLICATION CORE**

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7. List eight (8) ways that a pesticide applicator can communicate effectively with the public.

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8. An applicator should be concerned about bystanders and neighbours. **True or false?**

9. An emergency response plan is a hallmark of a professional applicator. **True or false?**

